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as never before and the need is likely to increase; (2) existing agencies, whether school or training class, seem essentially sound in theory and to need adjustment rather than reconstruction; (3) these adjustments can be fully effective only when the extension course, the training class, the library school, the librarians and the appointing officers of libraries work to-

gether in essential harmony. (4) It will be useless to plan training without having someone to train and there will not be enough persons to train unless enough salary can be offered to attract competent men and women from other lines which, to an outside observer, seem to give equal chances of service with more than an equal chance to live comfortably.

THE LIBRARY WAR SERVICE*

BY HERBERT PUTNAM, *Librarian of Congress (General Director A. L. A. War Service)*

The library war service has been a dominant, if not *the* dominant, note in the program of this Conference; and a general word in behalf of the administration of it is only natural.

In planning for the Conference we in charge of the work had to consider what was our duty to you here. As an Association you assumed the responsibility for this work; you secured the resources for it; and you are now to go before the public in another appeal. Can you go with confidence? Can you go with a clean conscience?

Confidence implies understanding. A complete understanding of our operations we could not give you. We could not put you in touch with every phase of the work, with every relationship. We could not put you in our own places, vest you with our experiences. All that we could do was, so far as a written statement could, to submit a report to you, with some statistics, and with an indication of the problems and the manner of meeting them. We could provide an exhibit for you to see; and we could produce for you to see and hear, some of the men and women who have been most intimately engaged in the actual service. Those things we have attempted.

We were certain that from these attempts you would gain a necessary assurance and some valuable impressions; that

you would feel that the work is well under way, and that it is already the *sort* of work that you meant to do; that you would be convinced, and feel confident of being able to convince the public, that it is the sort of work expected of you.

And as to the methods: we hoped you would feel that they have sustained your repute as an Association. Especially that your repute has been safeguarded in certain essentials: your repute for *soundness* of method, and for adaptability and flexibility in method; your ability to avoid dogmatism, and an excess of professionalism; and your concern for frugality against the temptation to be inconsiderately lavish. In bearing upon this last item it is no small matter, in any further appeal, that of the \$800,000 you have expended during the first eight months only \$60,000 went in salaries.

And as regards the actual administration: we wished you to see, to hear, and to feel the spirit of the men and women who have been engaged in the actual contacts. I do not know the impression they made upon you. I think, though, that you have felt their *competence* for the task, including especially a freedom from the excessive professionalism to which I have referred. And I trust you noted also a certain freedom in another particular—that implied in their references to Headquarters. One of them referred to some essential of his service as conceded reluctantly by Headquarters. I liked to have him get

*Stenographic report of extemporaneous address.

up and say that. It showed that he knew Headquarters would have no sensitiveness in the matter. He wouldn't have said it if he hadn't appreciated the cause of the reluctance; he knew the reluctance due to our difficulty in meeting his particular need while regarding our responsibility for the general policy.

And I trust you felt a certain sportsman-like attitude on the part of these workers—Miss Titcomb, for instance. She thought Leavenworth a small affair. [Though if she had considered she must have known that we knew it was only a big opportunity that deserved Miss Titcomb.] But she said to herself: "This is a military establishment; I go where I am sent." And she went; and she found it by no means a small opportunity. There is not such a thing in our service.

You have felt, I think, that these men and women who have gone into this service have not merely a conviction, but a real exultation in it. That is a fine and assuring thing. Nothing has given me greater satisfaction than the evidence of it.

I do not know your definition of a "general director." I suppose he is somebody who is "generally directing" as well as "directing generally." But my theory was that my prime duty was to gather to the service the men and women competent to conduct it. The process was, of course, a slow one; because the experience requisite must be an experience in the field, an experience then still to be developed. And for the work at Headquarters the final competence must be a combination of experience in the field with experience there.

The organization that has resulted—that now exists—is a competent one; and I hope you feel so.

As to the work accomplished we trust that you will think it sufficient to be assuring; but our greater concern is that you should realize the problems still unsolved, the magnitude of the work ahead.

In my own report I have tried to indicate them. They exist in every branch and phase of the establishment, the organization, the service. New ones are created

for us daily. And they are not problems that can be dealt with dogmatically. They require adaptation of our practice to actual conditions. It was a *military* establishment that we were entering and we were entering it at the invitation of the military authorities. Our subordination was to them; and it was only by satisfying them, by adjusting our practice to their requirements—even to their prejudices—that we could serve them acceptably, or even secure opportunity to serve them at all. Do not lose sight of that.

Now we are going on with the work. You and we are partners in it. We do not want you to be "silent partners." We need your aid; but we want also your suggestion, your counsel, your criticism. The matter may be a wrong thing done which you wish to call to our attention; it may be a thing wrongly done; it may be a thing imperfectly done; it may be an opportunity missed; or it may be yourself wishing an opportunity. In any case we shall assume that the inquiry or suggestion or criticism is solely for the purpose of aiding us. We shall assume this unless and until you convince us to the contrary.

But it is only fair to ask you to recognize one or two distinctions, to take account of one or two presumptions. They should affect your method or attitude in presenting the matter. A wrong thing done or a thing wrongly done press upon our attention as sharply as you like. But there is a difference between that and a thing imperfectly done, or an opportunity for the moment missed; because we may be as conscious of the defect or of the opportunity as you are. It is probable that for every such defect or opportunity that you observe, we know of at least ten. I would therefore be a bit more tentative in calling our attention to mere defects, as if they were something of which we were ignorant.

The matter may be an opportunity that you wish. The wish is perfectly legitimate, and you should by all means inform us of it. The spirit of war service is deeply personal with each of us. We want to give

expression to it. But the entire membership of the Association cannot find a personal opportunity in this service to the soldiers and sailors. That is clear. There must be a choice and we must make it. We are not infallible, and our choice is subject to limitations that we can't publish. But test us by the competence of the people who are chosen, not by your impression of the people left out. Test it on the affirmative side, not on the negative. It is by the people we select, not by those we fail to select, that our administration must be judged. For nineteen years at Washington I have been insisting upon this distinction. Almost weekly I have been asked to prove why a given person should not be appointed to the Library of Congress. I have refused for two reasons. First, because it would be impossible to prove it to their satisfaction; and second because it was not my business: I would be responsible for any appointments made, but I would not undertake to explain why I failed to appoint someone else.

There is a feature of this service which I had in mind when I referred to what I characterized as the sportsmanlike attitude of the men and women engaged in it. It is military service. That means, not that it requires a subordination strictly military, but that it is an emergency service requiring summary methods, summary decisions by a central authority. The central authority may not in judgment be perfect. On any particular its judgment may not be as sound as the judgment of some particular person among you. But the individual judgments among you cannot be applied to the problem. And there is a point at which discussion and explanations must cease, and a decision made. At that point, if you still differ, we can only ask you to trust us.

There is another incident of the service. It being in a sense military, we draw people into it summarily and may have to discontinue them summarily. Explanations are impracticable. That is understood among our camp librarians. As they come to the call, so when they are "relieved" they accept the release without question. The relief is no disparagement to them; it is not a discharge; it is not a dismissal. That is understood between them and us and in justice to them it should be understood generally.

As to all such decisions we hope, I say, that you will have faith in us. But your faith in us rests largely upon our faith in you. We have it: in your sincerity of purpose, in your unity of spirit.

Now you are to go before the public in a larger appeal. You can make it with confidence. And from what has been produced here you can give substantial reasons for it. Last fall you started to provide certain welfare work for an army of a million men; yesterday it was an army of two million men; in a few months it will be one of four million, and as many more as may be required. We began with the idea that the work was to be on this side of the water. From Dr. Raney's address yesterday, you have gathered that the overwhelming duty of it may be overseas. As Mr. Orr has said of the Y. M. C. A., "the center of gravity of the work itself may shift to the other side." The prospect creates a far larger opportunity for a prodigiously extended service.

We must all join in the appeal; we must bend ourselves to it. We must go before the public with confidence in the merit of what has been done, but also with a singleness of purpose and an honest unity of spirit.